

OPENING REMARKS
HB 526

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE GROESBECK
Before the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee

March 14, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I bring before you House Bill 526, a bill that amends Montana's Territorial Integrity Act for electric utilities. This bill is the result of over three years of Montana's cooperative and investor-owned utilities working together and compromising.

By way of some brief background, Montana's territorial integrity law was enacted in 1971. The law's primary purpose is to minimize duplication of power lines in Montana in areas served by more than one electric utility.

In 1997, as part of Senate Bill 390, some changes were made to the territorial integrity law. Some of the changes created considerable confusion over which utility has the right to serve.

The basic purpose of House Bill 526 is to clear up those ambiguities, and provide more clarity and certainty as to which utility has the right to serve.

House Bill 526 represents the solutions that both cooperatives and NorthWestern Energy—with input from Montana Dakota Utilities—believe will make the territorial law more workable for Montana's electric consumers and the utilities serving them.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the right to close and I will now give others the opportunity to explain in detail the specific provisions of House Bill 526.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.